GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:251
ANSWERED ON:19.11.2007
CLOSURE OF TEA GARDENS
Sarma Dr. Arun Kumar

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether tea garden labourers become jobless due to closure of some tea gardens in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the number of gardens and affected labourers, State-wise;

(c) whether the Government has taken any plan to protect the interests of these labourers either by compensation or through alternate employment;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES)

(a) &(b): Yes, Sir. As per the information furnished by the Ministry of Commerce &Industry, Department of Commerce, more than thirty thousand workers were effected due to the closure of 33 gardens as on 1st April, 2007.Out of these 33 gardens, 17 are in West Bengal, 14 in Kerala and 2 in Assam.

(c) to (e): The Government of India on 29th June, 2007 had announced a rehabilitation package for providing financial relief to the extent of Rs. 38.65 crores for the closed tea gardens. The package provides for restructuring of the outstanding bank dues, provision of fresh working capital with interest subsidy from Government, waiver of outstanding loan dues to Tea Board and settlement of provident fund dues in installments. It is envisaged that after the account of the gardens are regularized they would become eligible for term loan for replanting under the Special Purpose Tea Fund and upfront subsidy for the machinery items under the Quality Upgradation Scheme of Tea Board. The Government has also constituted a Committee for evaluating the proposals received for change of management of closed tea gardens under the provisions of Tea Act, 1953.

Some of the State Governments like Government of Kerala, West Bengal Government, where the number of gardens closed are more, have provided certain relief measures in order to alleviate distress of the jobless workers and their families. Relief measures essentially includes ensuring food security and wage employment through various rural development schemes. As a measure of interim relief the Government of India on 15th October, 2007 approved the payment of lumpsum amount of Rs. 1000/- per ward of the plantation workers of tea gardens which has remained closed as on date. As on date 10 of these 33 closed tea gardens have reopened. 9 of these opened gardens are in Kerala and one is in West Bengal.